

3/12/72

Dear Charlie,

I am happy about your yesterday's extravagance, for it was good to hear from you again and especially to know that you are all well and happy.

As you have perhaps detected, I hold a low opinion of almost all those considered "critics" in the west. Hal is great but inclined to be overly-imaginative sometimes and this could be increased by his detachment from the work in recent years. Paul is exceedingly well informed and, although we have had a few disagreements, only one serious, I have limitless respect for him and for the point I will be addressing, his judgement. He is solid, properly cautious, and conservative in his approach to the entire matter.

If you can for a moment consider your offer in the context of the approach of all intelligence operations, "need to know", and apply this standard, I think it could be wise, for while it is often a bit exciting to indulge notions and whims and idle curiosities, doing this can not only endanger people and their livelihoods ~~and~~ but it can also render what might at some time be an important service unavailable.

I would strongly encourage the most limited possible concept. If I can't be consulted, I would strongly encourage no venture without discussion with and agreement from Paul.

If you had had my experience with some of the zanies, and some of the more respected are dignified by referring to them this way, and if you had my knowledge of some of their ventures, you might better understand my concern.

So, that I am really saying is that for a number of reasons, not all of which are indicated above, I would strongly encourage the most circumspection in every aspect of the matter, including most of all those with whom it is even discussed and including by phone.

As a measure of my seriousness in this matter, please note my not availing myself of the offer with all the multitudinous interests ~~if~~ I have. And, it is too important in its potential to use lightly, every use presenting a jeopardy.

How I wish, though, that it could disclose informants!

Were Jamie here at this moment what a joy she'd have! Two families of ducks have just decided to take up residence with us, wild mallards. One, pretty clearly, are "our" ducks, having tolerated us annually for their reproductive cycle. The interlopers are, alternately, tolerated and chased by the male. There is constant turmoil at the pond. And, a third pair has been attracted, making life in the feathered world complicated and for it violent. If things go as they have in previous years, "our" ducks will soon be eating only at the house and there only off the kitchen steps. She'd love their color, their behavior patterns, their grace in the air and on the water, and their gradual return to domestication.

Thanks again and best to you all,